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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMCA](#) [KMPI](#) [KWMN](#) [YM](#) [DOMESTIC POLITICS](#)

SUBJECT: HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW CHIEF OF YEMENI

SOCIALIST PARTY

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶11. (SBU) Summary. Amidst calls of "Enough corruption! Enough plundering!" and "Let's put unity back on track," the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), Yemen's third most influential political party, concluded its Fifth Annual Conference on July 31. The conference wrapped up with the election of a new secretary general, Dr. Yassin Saeed Noman, a resolution to several heated "conservative" vs. "progressive" debates, and the release of a final Communiqu. End Summary.

¶12. (SBU) The YSP conducted its Fifth Annual National Convention July 26-31 in Sanaa. The Convention, attended by more than 2000 delegates from across the country, was touted as the YSP's last chance to re-ignite itself after suffering from political stagnation since the 2002 assassination of its powerful deputy SYG, Jarallah Omar.

"The Best Thing To Happen in Yemen Since 1994!"

¶13. (SBU) On July 30, Yassin Saeed Noman became the YSP's third SYG since Yemeni unification, after incumbent Ali Saleh Obaid Muqbil stepped down for health reasons. Noman takes leadership of the YSP at time when the party is perhaps the weakest in its history as a result of Omar's death and losing a large number of its leadership to exile after the 1994 Civil War.

¶14. (C) Noman, who returned from self imposed exile abroad nearly two years ago, is well respected in Yemeni political circles for his performance as the first Speaker of Parliament following Unification. His acceptance of the nomination sparked widespread congratulations from Yemeni political figures across the political spectrum. No one was more pleased than SYG of the ruling GPC party, Dr. Abdul Karim al-Iryani, who reportedly called Noman from Germany to thank him for taking the job the night of the election.

¶15. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Mustafa Noman, who is "good friends" with, but not related to, Yassin Saeed Noman, described the new YSP head as a "good man of solid national reputation. Everyone is optimistic he can revive the whole political spectrum," DFM Noman told DCM on August 2, adding that the new SYG nominee was not tainted by involvement in the "bloody era of the south" and has made his reputation as a competent technocrat. DFM Noman told DCM he was with SYG nominee Noman the night of the nomination and that the latter had some trepidation about accepting until a phone call from President Saleh persuaded his to take the post. DFM Noman said Iryani also called that night, praising Noman's election as "the best thing to happen in Yemen since the civil war in 1994."

High Expectations from All

¶16. (C) There are high expectations for the New Secretary General, which may explain the reluctance to accept the position until President Saleh's urging. Political observers, including long time YSP Central Committee member Abdullah Mohammed, expect that SYG nominee Noman will be able to strengthen the party's internal structures, badly damaged from endemic infighting since 1994. Moderates within the leading opposition party, Islah, hope some real competition from the Socialists will force Islah's conservative leadership to push forward with their reform agenda. The ROYG is hoping for a more "responsible" opposition with Noman leading the YSP.

¶17. (SBU) Noman's appointment piggybacked on the election of a 301-member Central Committee responsible for formulating the YSP's platform and electing its Politburo leadership. The elections, described by convention participants and local media as "fair and transparent," elected 8 members of parliament, 40 women, and 13 YSP leaders currently in exile to the powerful committee.

Heated Debate And A Call For Unity

¶18. (SBU) The Conference, which was closed to the general

public, concluded on July 31, three days later than expected. Press observers told Poloff that the delay was caused by several heated debates on platform and leadership issues. The debate was split between two trends: A conservative "old guard," which insists that the ROYG remedy its past actions against the YSP as a precondition to the YSP's political participation, and "progressive unionists," who advocated immediate political participation. Newspapers also reported that "unionists" won a slight majority over the conservatives in the Politburo, the YSP's 29-person body charged with running the party.

¶9. (SBU) The convention was also peppered with calls on the ROYG to reinvigorate "true" national unity. Senior YSP member Mohammed Masdos led the charge, calling on Saleh to begin a dialogue with the YSP in order to remove the "effects of war" and find "the path to unity." Several times throughout the convention, other speakers called for "true unity" supported by chants declaring, "The YSP is for unity!" and demanding, "dialogue for reform!"

The Final Communiqu

¶10. (SBU) the convention published its final communique on August 1, calling for a national plan to fight corruption, a political system that puts rule of law above all, and urging the ROYG to secure civil liberties and human rights. The official platform, released to party members, will be distributed to the press and public in the near future.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: The convention seems to have breathed new life into a party reeling from infighting and stagnation since the assassination of Jarallah Omar. The new SYG must convince his followers to stop fretting about the past and formulate a realistic political and strategic plan for moving forward. If the YSP fails to look forward, it will lose this last chance to become a party with any political relevance to Yemenis. Although there were many calls for dialogue with the ROYG and for "true unity," the party has yet to articulate what this really means or how it expects to achieve it. This phrase could reflect the party's willingness to join other parties, including the GPC, in order to achieve "unity" and, more importantly, to survive.

End Comment.

Krajeski